

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

*Flora Vectensis: being a Systematic Description of the Phænogamous or Flowering Plants and Ferns indigenous to the Isle of Wight.* By the late W. A. BROMFIELD, M.D. &c. Edited by Sir W. J. HOOKER and T. BELL SALTER, M.D. London, 1856. 8vo, pp. 678, xxxv. Portrait of the Author. Map.

WE have recently received a copy of this valuable and long-expected posthumous work, and have the pleasure of expressing, upon the whole, our high approbation of it. The editors have wisely avoided adding more than was absolutely necessary to the manuscript of our lamented friend; but, owing to his decease before the completion of his original plan, it was necessary to add the technical characters of many genera and sections of them, and of not a few species, in which the manuscript was deficient. In doing this they have usually adopted the words of Messrs. Hooker and Arnott from their 'British Flora,' but in some cases where it was perfectly manifest that the author was adopting the arrangement of Mr. Babington, they have taken the definitions from that gentleman's 'Manual.' In this we think that they have exercised a sound judgement, although we fancy that they have not always correctly appreciated Dr. Bromfield's views. But this is a matter of very little consequence, for the value of the work is not at all affected by it. It is very unfortunate that the author did not leave behind him a more complete account of his own views on these matters, for his opinions upon the best characters to be employed in defining the genera and species would have been highly acceptable, from the attention which he is known to have paid to the value of characters in the different natural orders. The great peculiarity and value of the book, as it is now presented to us, consists in the elaborate descriptions of the great majority of the species drawn from the examination of very many specimens of each plant. They are by far the most complete and accurate descriptions of British plants which we possess, and strongly remind us of the elaborate and voluminous 'Flora Italica' of Bertoloni, but even surpass those of that eminent botanist. From its proximity to the mainland, the Isle of Wight possesses a more extensive flora than is usually to be found in small islands, and therefore this work contains Dr. Bromfield's descriptions of a very large portion of the common plants of England. From the situation of the Isle, it of course does not include the plants peculiar to the more distant parts of Britain. There are many species of which the full descriptions were not prepared by the author, and in such cases the editors have inserted a specific character derived from one or the other of the above-mentioned British Floras, together with such notes as were to be found in the author's manuscripts. For some months preceding his final departure from England, Dr. Bromfield had been inserting in successive numbers of the third volume of the Botanical Journal called the 'Phytologist,' a very complete account of Isle of Wight plants, in which he communicated to the public a large quantity

of most valuable critical and other remarks. As much of this information was acquired, and many of the views there adopted were formed, at a later period than that at which the parts of this work which treat concerning the same plants, were written, we think that the editors might advantageously have added, as notes to the Flora, many extracts from these papers. It is plain that they have thought differently, for the 'Phytologist' is rarely quoted by them.

The author's preface contains some remarks upon the rules to be observed in deciding upon the claims of plants to be considered as indigenous or introduced, which well deserve the consideration of the writers of local and even national floras. He very properly protests against the scepticism of those botanists who "reject as aliens a large proportion of species that have been long recognized and admitted by common consent into our indigenous catalogues," acknowledging at the same time that "they at least err on the safe side." He adopts the view expressed by Fries in the following words: "Eas dico *plantas indigenas*, quæ per longam annorum seriem sine omni cultura inter provinciam copiose et definito loco propellarunt et quotannis sunt multiplicatæ." He is of opinion that "the safest criterion for resolving doubtful claims to enrolment is to be sought for by reference to the geographical distribution of the species under consideration. The more extended study of this important branch of botanical science would . . . go far in removing many of those scruples that are raised against the admission of no small number of our vegetable productions into the aboriginal lists." Accordingly great attention is paid to the continental distribution of all plants upon which much doubt has been cast. Botanists have cause to thank him for this care; for we are quite convinced that it is the true mode of attaining correct views on this contested subject. It often happens that plants which are now only found in rather doubtful stations in our fully cultivated country are really old natives which have been reduced in quantity or driven from their original sites by improvements in agriculture. When this has happened the plants may now continue to exist in a very few restricted spots, or be found scattered thinly over a large district, maintaining themselves with difficulty in hedgerows or on bits of waste ground. In such cases, it is much the fashion to state boldly that they are not indigenous, without inquiring if their continental distribution is or is not favourable to their claims to admission amongst British plants.

It does not seem desirable to extend this notice by entering upon discussion concerning any of the species, although there are many things stated by the author, or introduced by the editors, which do not accord with our views. In some of these cases we feel quite sure that the remarks would have been omitted or modified had the author been permitted to prepare his work for the press; but the editors have done wisely in printing the manuscript as they found it. It must be remembered that the work has not, alas! had the benefit of the author's revision since the spring of 1850, and that much advance has been made in our knowledge of British plants during the last six years. These facts do not, however, detract from the value of the

'Flora Vectensis,' the essential peculiarity of which lies, as we have already stated, in its valuable original and elaborate descriptions of the species noticed by its author.

Cautioning botanists to bear in mind that the real date of the book is not that of its publication—and that it is posthumous; and recommending those who may use it to distinguish carefully between the work of the author and the additions (clearly marked with inverted commas) of the editors,—we most strongly recommend the work to our readers.

*Sylloge Floræ Europææ seu plantarum vascularium Europæ indigenarum enumeratio, adjectis synonymis gravioribus et indicata singularum distributione geographica.* Auctore C. F. NYMAN. Oerebroæ, 1854–55. Royal 8vo, pp. 442. xxiv.

This is a work which was wanted as affording a mode of easily ascertaining the extent to which any species of plant is known, upon published authority, to be distributed throughout Europe. It cannot fail of being much employed for that purpose, having been drawn up with great care. A list of the works used in its compilation is appended, by means of which the author's accuracy may be tested in doubtful cases. Of course a work of this nature must have occupied a considerable time in its preparation, and therefore we cannot hope to find that it is quite up to the present state of our knowledge. Judging from a somewhat careful examination, it is far more complete in that respect than we expected.

The chief objection to it is found in the system upon which it is arranged. Being the work of a Swede, probably a pupil of Fries, it is not wonderful that he should think the system proposed by that eminent man the proper one to adopt. As that classification is not in common use, some little inconvenience results. This is met by the addition of a copious index to the genera and subgenera.

## PROCEEDINGS OF LEARNED SOCIETIES.

### ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

February 12, 1856.—Dr. Gray, F.R.S., in the Chair.

DESCRIPTIONS OF SOME COLEOPTEROUS INSECTS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM, HITHERTO APPARENTLY UNNOTICED. BY ADAM WHITE.

The number of "new species" of Coleopterous Insects in the Museum collection is in relative proportion to the great richness of the other branches. In this paper, some species belonging to the families *Prionidæ*, *Lamiadæ*, and *Cetoniadæ* will be given, as there is every likelihood, from the way in which these great groups have been investigated by Messrs. Serville, Burmeister, Schaum, Gory, and other entomologists, that the species are as yet unrecorded in scientific